



Norfolk Community Services Board

Update: November 2004

Thomas S. Weaver, Chair

I need to bring the following critical issue to your attention, because it affects the safety and welfare of Norfolk residents.

- **There is a critical shortage of psychiatric beds for individuals who need to be held under a Temporary Detention Order (TDO).** When an

individual is considered to be a danger to self or others, Section 37.167.1 of the Code of Virginia allows that person to be held in a designated psychiatric facility for a period of 48 to 72 hours. During that time, a psychiatric evaluation will be conducted to determine whether that person should be committed for treatment in order to ensure the safety of the individual, his or her family members, and the public.

Before that can happen, however, a TDO bed must be located, and most days in Virginia there is no TDO bed available anywhere in the state. Throughout the Commonwealth, mental health workers spend hours, sometimes days, trying to locate a TDO bed, while the public is put in harm's way or the mentally ill go untreated. I can think of no other health care situation that would require a person in crisis to spend hours handcuffed in a police station or wait—as in one case—for three days in a hospital Emergency Room.

It happens in Norfolk all the time. In any given week, Norfolk CSB receives 25 to 30 requests for a TDO. Norfolk's problem is exacerbated by the fact that there are no TDO facilities in the city, so Norfolk residents must always be transported to another city. The question is, will it be Portsmouth or Williamsburg? Or Charlottesville? Or no where at all?

On October 9th in Norfolk, a magistrate signed a Temporary Detention Order for a 24-year-old man. When deputies transported him to Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, they were told no bed was available. They had no option but to return him to Norfolk, where he was released. Within hours, he assaulted a clerk at a convenience store. The clerk filed a complaint and the young man was arrested. He was then transported to Norfolk City Jail, where there is always a bed available.

This is not acceptable.

All the parties involved—the City, the State, the Community Services Boards—must work together to find a solution to this problem before it turns into something even more tragic than what we have seen to date.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please feel free to call me at 623-1929, or George Pratt, Executive Director, at 441-5300.

THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT HAMPTON ROADS WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2004

Mentally ill too often let go for lack of beds

Some are dangers to themselves, others

a commitment to care

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